B6045-5-U

Coming to Terms

Teachers' Views on Current Issues in Education

The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 1991

Conducted for:

Metropolitan Life Insurance Company
by
Louis Harris and Associates, Inc.

Fieldwork: December 1990

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INTRODUCTION

This survey was designed to measure the needs, plans, and perceptions of experienced teachers in America's public schools.

It includes questions on what would have been most helpful whey they began teaching, what would be most helpful to them now, and how they would choose to deal with emerging problems related to tightened budgets and school finance reform. It also includes questions on their plans for the future and how those plans might be affected by school policy.

This is the first of two surveys of experienced teachers and is a companion to a similar set of surveys of new teachers. A second survey of each group will be conducted in 1991.

The Survey Design

A total of 1,000 experienced teachers were surveyed. The sample was designed to be representative of all teachers in the public schools in kindergarten through grade 12 throughout the United States.

As in the prior Metropolitan Life Surveys of the American Teacher, Louis Harris and Associates drew a random sample of current teachers from a list of 1.2 million teachers compiled by Market Data Retrieval of Westport, Connecticut. Sample sizes for complete interviews were set for each state, based on statistics of public school teachers in each state published by the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics.

In June 1990, each selected teacher was contacted at his or her school by telephone, and requested to participate in the two surveys during the 1990-1991 school year. The message included a toll-free number to allow a return call.

Each teacher was screened to ensure that he or she currently teaches in an elementary or secondary level public school and teaches at least part-time in the classroom, and would be teaching in the coming school year. Respondents who passed the screen were telephoned at home in December, 1990.

Weighting of the Teachers' Sample

The achieved sample of teachers was weighted to the latest, best available parameters of race, sex, years of teaching experience, and geographic region. This adjusts these key variables, where necessary, to their actual proportions in the population.

A Note on Reading the Tables

An asterisk (*) on a table signifies a value of less than one-half percent (0.5%). A dash (-) represents a value of zero. Percentages may not always add to 100% because of computer rounding or the acceptance of multiple answers from respondents. The base for each question is the total answering that question. The base for all tables is 1,000 new teachers.

Possible Sampling Error

It is customary with probability samples of 1,000 to write that "this survey has a possible sampling error of +/-3%." However, this is a somewhat misleading statement because in any survey there is a small possibility that measurement errors are substantially greater than this, and there is no way to calculate the probabilities of errors arising from factors such as human error, non-response, interviewer bias or respondents who do not understand the questions.

THE SURVEY FINDINGS

1. What Experienced Teachers Believe Would Have Most Helped Their Induction Into The Profession

Experienced teachers believe that more practical advice, assistance, and training would have been helpful in easing their induction into the profession. Nearly half (47%) say that during their first years as a teacher, the advice and assistance of an assigned experienced teacher would have been most helpful in preparing them to be a more effective teacher. Another 39% say more practical training, such as a year's internship before having their own classroom, would have been most helpful, while only 13% (including 31% of black teachers) name better training in working with students and families from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

> Observation:
> This finding is consistent with results of prior Metropolitan Life surveys of experienced and new teachers. The 1989 Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher reveals that 34% of America's public school teachers had mentor teacher programs in their schools and that fully 86% of those who had such programs in their schools favor them. The 1990 Metropolitan Life Survey of New Teachers shows that while 80% of new teachers believe they were prepared by their training to teach students from a variety of different ethnic backgrounds, fully 58% wish they had had more practical training before having their own classroom.
>
> The new finding is that with the perspective of their years of experience, so many experienced teachers believe that a mentor teacher and more practical training would have been most helpful at the beginning of their teaching careers.

Q.A2

Table 1-1

WHAT WOULD HAVE MOST HELPED PREPARE TEACHERS TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE

Q.: Thinking of your first year or two as a teacher, which one of the following would have been most helpful in preparing you to be a more effective teacher? Was it (READ LIST):

		Teacher Ethnicity		
	Total	White	Black	Hispanic
Base:	100	903	58	22
	%	%	%	%
A skilled experienced teacher assigned to provide you with advice and assistance	47	48	37	53
More practical training such as a year's internship before having your own classroom	39	40	31	36
Better training in working with students and families from a variety of ethnic backgrounds	13	11	31	9
Not sure	1	1	1	2

2. What Would Be Most Helpful Now

In contrast, a majority of experienced teachers (54%) believe that smaller classes and better supplies and education materials would be most helpful to them now. Another 23% name training and support services to deal with students' social and other problems affecting their education, and only 21% say more opportunities to work cooperatively with other teachers to enhance each other's skills would be most helpful to them now.

Observation:
It is troublesome to find that, at a time of worsening budgetary constraints, most teachers choose the (almost certainly) most costly option, as the one which most help them be more effective.

Q.A3

Table 2-1

WHAT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL NOW

Q.: Which one of the following would be most helpful to you now in being a more effective teacher?

	Total
Base	1000
	%
Smaller classes and better supplies and education materials	54
Continuous training and support services to deal with the social and other problems that effect your students' ability to get the most out of school	23
More opportunities to work cooperatively with other teachers in you school to enhance each other's skills	21
Not sure	2

3. Teacher Retention

Plans and Expectations

There is reason to expect that the problem of poor retention of teachers may (at least temporarily) be abating. Only 19% of teachers say they are very likely (9%) or somewhat likely (10%) to leave teaching in the next five years -- fully 56% say they are not at all likely and 25% are not too likely to leave. This is a substantial change from 1989, when 33% of teachers said they were very or somewhat likely to leave teaching and only 40% were not at all likely.

Two somewhat heartening trends appear to be continuing. The variable most strongly associated with expectations about continuing or leaving teaching remains teacher assessment of the quality of education in their school. Fully 63% of teachers who say the quality of education in their school is excellent say they are not at all likely to leave the teaching profession in the next five years (up from 57% in 1989) -- only 7% are very likely to leave. Among teachers

in fair to poor quality schools, 29% are very likely to leave, and only 31% are not at all likely to leave teaching within five years. As teacher rating of school quality remains high (45% excellent, 49% good, and only 5% fair or poor), poor quality education is not pushing large numbers of teachers out of the profession.

The second heartening trend is that experienced teachers with between five and nineteen years of experience are now less likely to leave teaching than they were in the mid-1980s when the Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher began. In 1985, only 36% of teachers with five to nine years of experience were not at all likely to leave teaching in the next five years; by 1989 the proportion was up to 45%, and today it is 53%. Similarly, in 1985, 45% of teachers with 10 to 19 years of teaching experience were not at all likely to leave the profession; by 1989 the proportion was 49%, and today it is 57%.

Observation:
There are several possible reasons for these signs of improved teacher retention. The 1989 Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher stated, "Teachers improved evaluation of school reforms has not yet resulted in a discernible change in their plans for the next five years." It may be that school reforms are beginning to have an impact on teachers' career plans. Changes in teacher salary structures, which move some teachers into higher earning levels more quickly may also be a factor. And, the state of the economy may make teaching relatively more attractive now than when the economy was more robust.

31

Table 3-1

: Within the next five years how likely is it that you will leave the teaching profession to go into some different occupation?

	Total		Quality of Education			Years Teaching							
					Fair or	Less Than 5		5-9		10-19		20 or More	
	1989	1990	Excellent	Good	Poor	1985	1990	1985	1990	1985	1990	1985	1990
se:	2000	1000	457	485	55	88	48	252	129	894	387	610	436
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
y likely	13	9	7	9	29	10	4	13	5	8	8	20	16
rly likely	13	10	9	11	8	9	8	16	15	17	11	10	5
too likely	26	25	21	28	32	29	34	35	29	29	25	17	20
at all likely	48	56	63	52	31	50	53	36	51	45	57	53	58

Reasons

Most teachers who think they may leave teaching in the next five years say the difficulty of teaching students with many social problems, seeking higher incomes, and lack of support from school administrations are factors in their thinking about leaving. Boredom and decreased satisfaction with teaching, and inadequate preparation for students' diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds are not factors in most teachers' assessments of their career plans. Teachers in schools they rate as of excellent quality are less likely than others to say that each of these issues (with the exception of seeking more money) is a major factor.

When asked the one most important reason they are likely to leave teaching, the same three factors dominate. As is logical, teachers with lower pay are likelier to name money as the most important reason, and teachers in lower quality schools are likelier to say lack of support from the school administration.

Q.B

Table 3-2

FACTORS AFFECTING THE DECISION TO LEAVE TEACHING

Q.: Is (READ EACH ITEM) a major factor, a minor factor, or not a factor in your thinking about leaving teaching?

Base: 194	Major Factor %	Minor Factor %	Not A Factor %	Not Sure %
All the social problems faced by students makes teaching too difficult	39	35	26	-
You need or want to earn more money	39	29	32	*
Lack of support from the school administration	30	31	39	-
Teaching has become boring and less satisfying	15	25	61	-
You don't feel fully prepared to teach students with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds	1	20	79	-

Table 3-3

FACTORS AFFECTING THE DECISION TO LEAVE TEACHING BY QUALITY OF EDUCATION
(% SAYING MAJOR FACTOR)

		Quality of Education		
	Total	Excellent	Good	Fair or Poor
Base:	194	38	99	17
	%	%	%	%
All the social problems faced by students makes teaching too difficult	39	35	40	52
You need or want to earn more money	39	31	41	59
Lack of support from the school administration	30	19	32	58
Teaching has become boring and less satisfying	15	2	21	31
You don't feel fully prepared to teach students with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds	1	2	1	4

Q.B3 Table 3-4

THE ONE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN CONSIDERING LEAVING TEACHING

Q.: Which one is the most important factor?

Base: Likely to leave the teaching profession.

		Quality of Education			Teacher Income			
	Total	Excellent	Good	Fair or Poor	$20,000 or Less	$20,001- $30,000	$30,001- $40,000	$40,001 or More
Base:	194	78	99	17	12	84	63	33
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Lack of support from the school administration	23	12	28	36	9	30	16	21
Teaching has become boring and less satisfying	9	6	11	13	-	10	13	4
You don't feel fully prepared to teach students with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds	1	2	*	-	6	-	1	-
You need or want to earn more money	27	32	22	34	60	25	24	11
All the social problems faced by students makes teaching too difficult	25	23	29	11	16	22	31	33
Other	14	24	8	6	8	13	12	26
Not sure	1	2	2	-	-	-	3	5

According to all teachers, addressing the major factors moving teachers towards leaving -- help in dealing with students' social and personal problems, higher salary scales, greater respect and more involvement in decisions affecting them and their students -- would have a major impact on their decisions to continue or leave teaching. Interestingly, the responses of teachers who are likely and unlikely to leave teaching soon differ little.

Q.B4, Q.B5 Table 3-5

IMPROVEMENTS WHICH COULD HAVE AN IMPACT ON TEACHER RETENTION

	Q.: Would (READ EACH ITEM) have a major impact, a minor impact, or no impact on your decision to continue or leave teaching?				Q.: Which one would have the greatest impact?
	Major Impact	Minor Impact	No Impact	Not Sure	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
Base: 1000					
Greater respect for teachers and teaching profession	53	29	18	*	19
More involvement in the decisions that affect teachers and students in your school	51	32	16	*	24
Better pay with more room for future salary increases	47	34	18	*	26
More help in dealing with the social and personal problems which hinder your students' ability to learn	46	36	18	*	22
A safer school environment	20	33	47	*	4
Other	-	-	-	-	3
Not sure	-	-	-	-	2

4. Managing School Budgets in an Austere Time

Faced with responsibility for managing their school's budget with limited resources, most teachers would take several other actions prior to either increasing class size or reducing their future salary increases. The most unacceptable option for teachers is increasing class size -- only 9% of teachers say they would do this.

Faced with trade-offs between support services and future salary increases, most teachers (64%) would "cut as much money as necessary from administration, supplies, and support services so that teachers could continue to get fair salary increases. About three in five teachers (59%) would reduce the number of special classes and activities to keep the core curriculum strong.

Observation:
It is useful here to note both the majority view and the views of substantial minorities. One-third (33%) of teachers say they would not cut as much money as necessary from other services to assure continuing fair increases in teacher salaries, and 27% would limit increases in teacher salaries to pay for more support services. The responses to these questions are fairly consistent across teacher income levels.

Q.4 Table 4-1

HOW TEACHERS WOULD MANAGE THEIR SCHOOL'S BUDGET WITH LIMITED RESOURCES

Q.: If you were responsible for managing your school's budget and had limited resources, would you (READ EACH ITEM)?

	Yes, Would %	No, Wouldn't %	Not Sure %
Base: 1000			
Cut as much money as necessary from administration, supplies, and support services so that teachers could continue to get fair salary increases	64	33	3
Reduce the number of special classes and activities to keep the core curriculum strong	59	39	2
Limit increases in teacher salaries to pay for more support services	27	71	1
Increase class size	9	90	1

5. School Finance Reform

A key issue in the 1990s is the reform of school financing. Among the many different specific changes being proposed and (in some cases) implemented, are three underlying strategies: redistributing state aid to provide greater assistance to districts with the neediest students, equal state aid regardless of each district's own resources, and linking funding to student performance.

Fully 75% of teachers support the state providing "greater financial assistance to schools with more poverty and students with more educational problems than to schools that have students who are better off" -- only 8% strongly oppose this policy. Not surprisingly, the strongest support comes from teachers in schools with all or many low-income and minority students. Nonetheless, support is strong even among teachers with few or no low-income and minority students. Teachers are evenly split about whether all schools should receive the same amount of state assistance regardless of the school district's own resources. Overwhelmingly, teachers reject (85%) the concept that all funding increases to schools should be linked to the performance of students in the schools. Opposition to this proposal is uniformly strong among all teacher groups, including teachers who might benefit the most from this proposal -- those in excellent quality schools (80%).

Q.C2 Table 5-1

SUPPORT FOR THREE SCHOOL FINANCE REFORMS

Q.: The way in which schools are financed will be a key issue in the 1990s. Many states are trying new ways of raising and distributing revenues for education. Would you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the following proposals for funding education?

	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Not Sure	Support	Oppose
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
The state should provide greater financial assistance to schools with more poverty and students with more educational problems than to schools that have students who are better off	34	41	17	8	*	75	25
All schools should receive the same amount of state assistance regardless of the school district's own resources	28	23	25	24	*	51	49
All funding increases to schools should be linked to the performance of students in the school	3	12	23	62	*	15	85

APPENDIX A: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

LOUIS HARRIS AND ASSOCIATES, INC.
630 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10111

/ FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:
/
/ Questionnaire No.:_____
/
/_____ 5-6-7-8

Study No. 902072 (Experienced Teachers Survey I)

Date November 30, 1990

Sample Point No./ / / / / / / / /
10-11-12-13-14-15-16

Time Started:_____A.M./P.M.

Interviewer:_____ Date:_____

Area Code:_____ Telephone No.:_____
(17-26)

Hello, I'm _____ from Louis Harris and Associates, the national survey research firm in New York. As you probably remember, this spring you agreed to be part of a panel of teachers who would be interviewed twice during this school year. We are conducting the first of these national surveys among teachers to learn some of their opinions and attitudes about the American educational system, and we would like to ask you a few questions.

FROM OBSERVATION: Respondent Sex

Male.....(27(____-1
Female.....____-2

1. Do you teach in an elementary school, a junior high or middle school, or a high school?

Elementary school (grades K-5 or 6).....(28(48 -1
Junior high/middle school (grades 6 or 7 -- 8 or 9)..... 20 -2
High school (grades 9-12 or 10-12)..... 30 -3
Both junior high and high school..... 2 -4

2. Thinking about the public school in which you teach, how would you rate the quality of education in your school -- excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

Excellent.....(29(45 -1
Pretty good..... 49 -2
Only fair..... 5 -3
Poor..... * -4
Not sure..... * -5

A. TEACHERS PREPARATION AND ASSISTANCE

A1. All together, for how many years have you worked as a teacher?

Mean / 1 / 5 / Years
(30-31)

Not sure....(32(- -1

ASK EVERYONE

A2. Thinking of your first year or two as a teacher, which one of the following would have been most helpful in preparing you to be a more effective teacher? Was it (READ LIST)?

ROTATE -- START WITH "X"

( ) a. A skilled experienced teacher assigned to provide you with advice and assistance.....(33(47 -1

OR

( ) b. More practical training such as a year's internship before having your own classroom..... 39 -2

OR

( ) c. Better training in working with students and families from a variety of ethnic backgrounds..... 13 -3

d. Not sure..... 1 -4

43. Which one of the following would be most helpful to you now in being a more effective teacher? Would it be (READ LIST)?

ROTATE -- START WITH "X"

( ) a. Smaller classes and better supplies and educational materials.....(34(54 -1

OR

( ) b. Continuous training and support services to deal with the social and other problems that effect your students' ability to get the most out of school..... 23 -2

OR

( ) c. More opportunities to work cooperatively with other teachers in your school to enhance each other's skills..... 21 -3

d. Not sure..... 2 -5

B. PLANS REGARDING TEACHING (RETENTION)

B1. Within the next five years, how likely is it that you will leave the teaching profession to go into some different occupation -- very likely, fairly likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?

Very likely.....	(35(9 -1	
Fairly likely.....	10 -2	(ASK Q.B2)
Not too likely.....	25 -3	
Not at all likely.....	56 -4	(SKIP TO Q.B4)
Not sure.....	* -5	

B2. Is (READ EACH ITEM) a major factor, a minor factor, or not a factor in your thinking about leaving teaching?

B3. Which one is the most important factor?

ROTATE -- START WITH "X"	Q.B2 Major Factor	Minor Factor	Not a Factor	Not Sure	Q.B3
( ) a. Lack of support from the school administration.....	(36(30 -1	31 -2	39 -3	- -4	(41(23 -1
( ) b. Teaching has become boring and less satisfying.....	(37(15 -1	25 -2	61 -3	- -4	9 -2
( ) c. You don't feel fully prepared to teach students with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.....	(38(1 -1	20 -2	79 -3	* -4	27 -3
( ) d. You need or want to earn more money.....	(39(39 -1	29 -2	32 -3	* -4	27 -4
( ) e. All the social problems faced by students makes teaching too difficult.....	(40(39 -1	35 -2	26 -3	- -4	25 -5
Other (Specify).....	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX				14 -6
_____					
_____					
Not sure.....	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX				1 -7

B4. Would (READ EACH ITEM) have a major impact, a minor impact, or no impact on your decision to continue or leave teaching?

B5. Which one would have the greatest impact?

ROTATE -- START WITH "X"	Q.B4 Major Impact	Minor Impact	No Impact	Not Sure	Q.B5
) a. Better pay with more room for future salary increases....(42	47 -1	34 -2	18 -3	* -4	(47(26 -1
) b. Greater respect for teachers and the teaching profession.....(43	53 -1	29 -2	18 -3	* -4	19 -2
) c. More help in dealing with the social and personal problems which hinder your students' ability to learn.(44	46 -1	36 -2	18 -3	* -4	22 -3
) d. A safer school environment.(45	20 -1	33 -2	47 -3	* -4	4 -4
) e. More involvement in the decisions that affect teachers and students in your school.....(46	51 -1	32 -2	16 -3	* -4	24 -5
Other (Specify).....	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx				3 -6
_____					
_____					
Not sure.....	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx				2 -7

C. TRADE-OFFS

C1. If you were responsible for managing your school's budget and had limited resources, would you (READ EACH ITEM) or not?

ROTATE -- START AT "X"		Yes, Would	No Wouldn't	Not Sure
( ) a.	Limit increases in teacher salaries to pay for more support services.....(48(	27 -1	71 -2	1 -3
( ) b.	Reduce the number of special classes and activities to keep the core curriculum strong.....(49(	59 -1	39 -2	2 -3
( ) c.	Increase class size.....(50(	9 -1	90 -2	1 -3
( ) d.	Cut as much money as necessary from administration, supplies, and support services so that teachers could continue to get fair salary increases...(51(	64 -1	33 -2	3 -3

C2. The way in which schools are financed will be a key issue in the 1990s. Many states are trying new ways of raising and distributing revenues for education. Would you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the following proposals for funding education? (READ EACH ITEM)

		Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Not Sure
( ) a.	The state should provide greater financial assistance to schools with more poverty and students with more educational problems than to schools that have students who are better off.....(52(	34 -1	41 -2	17 -3	8 -4	* -5
( ) b.	All schools should receive the same amount of state assistance regardless of the school district's own resources.....(53(	28 -1	23 -2	25 -3	24 -4	* -5
( ) c.	All funding increases to schools should be linked to the performance of students in the schools.(54(	3 -1	12 -2	23 -3	62 -4	* -5

F. **FACTUALS**

F1.. How many students in your school come from families whose income is below the average of the community -- all of them, many of them, some of them, only a few, or none?

All of them.....	(55(6	-1
Many.....	39	-2
Some.....	36	-3
A few.....	16	-4
None.....	1	-5
Not sure.....	1	-6

F2. How many students in your school are from minority families -- all of them, many of them, some of them, only a few, or none?

All of them.....	(56(5	-1
Many.....	25	-2
Some.....	26	-3
A few.....	40	-4
None.....	4	-5
Not sure.....	*	-6

F3. Do you consider yourself of Hispanic origin or descent, or not?

Yes, Hispanic.....	(57(3	-1
No, not Hispanic.....	96	-2
Not sure.....	*	-3

F4. Do you consider yourself White, Black, Asian, or what?

White.....	(58(89	-1
Black.....	7	-2
Asian.....	*	-3
Other.....	3	-4
Not sure.....	-	-5
Refused.....	*	-6

F5. Which of the following income categories best describes the 1989 income you derived from <u>teaching</u>, before taxes. Was it (READ LIST)?

$15,000 or less.....	(59(*	-1
$15,001 to $20,000.....	8	-2
$20,001 to $25,000.....	27	-3
$25,001 to $30,000.....	25	-4
$30,001 to $35,000.....	15	-5
$35,001 to $40,000.....	14	-6
$40,001 to $50,000.....	8	-7
$50,001 or over.....	2	-8
Not sure.....	*	-9
Refused.....	1	-0

60-80Z

Thank completes the interview. Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Time Ended_____(____A.M.
(____P.M.